

Welcome to the County of Los Angeles Return to Work (RTW) Guide.

The purpose of this Guide is to provide a standardized procedure to aid RTW coordinators, supervisors and managers in implementing RTW principles in their efforts to assist injured/ill employees to return to work and manage their cases. The Guide contains recommended steps to follow in a user friendly format.

We understand that the County departments are diverse in their programs, and we have taken great steps to consider those variances while pinpointing all of our common needs and goals in accomplishing the tasks involved in RTW. The results are contained in this guide, which includes the following:

Action Guide – provides suggested steps to take from day one of an injury/illness, through a 30 month period

Timeline Overview – a sample boilerplate format to manage individual cases

We have also implemented a Medical Provider Network (MPN) website, which will provide crucial access to Initial Treatment Centers, as required by the State of California. The website also includes all of the information and documents related to the RTW Resource Manual, the Chief Administrative Office's Disability Management Programs, and Occupational Health and Safety Programs. As well as:

Glossary of Terms – a comprehensive glossary tailored to RTW terminology

Step by Step Packets for Supervisors, Employees and Doctors - designed to help streamline the process from the time of injury through initial treatment and notification of all applicable parties

Forms - the necessary documents to support each item mentioned

-Special Thanks-

We would like to extend our special thanks to the RTW Committee, especially Raquel Peña, who spearheaded the Countywide effort. Many County employees contributed time and energy toward the development of this guide and have strengthened the County's overall structure and support for these programs.

Day One... Is crucial for the entire process. On this day, the clock starts ticking for the employee and employer.

Emergencies: Call 911 and advise management

ACTION ITEMS	
Injury reporting – 800 call number (within 24 hours)	
Set up an injury file folder	
Establish a Leave Management Timeline	
If the employee has a pre-designated doctor, obtain the doctor's name and phone number	
Refer the employee to the Initial Treatment Center	
Provide employee with the RTW packet	
Provide supervisor with the RTW packet	
Provide Job Description form (this is in the Supervisor Packet)	
Request Medical Certification from employee	
Designate Leave: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Pregnancy Disability Leave (PDL)- California Family Rights Act (CFRA)- Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)	
<i>Employees off from work due to a workers' compensation injury should be placed on FMLA unless Labor Code 4850 (Safety) time.</i>	
<i>MegaFlex participants/STD waiting period starts (7 or 14 calendar days).</i>	
Diary employee contact follow up	
Calendar next item	

Day Two & Three... Follow up is just as important. Determine if the employee was released to full or modified duty or placed on medical leave. If the employee was placed on medical leave, a plan of action needs to be prepared.

ACTION ITEMS	
Submit injury reporting paper work with completed Wage Statement and Supervisor Investigation report to TPA	
Ensure that the RTW packet has been completed by doctor, supervisor and employee	
Ensure that employee submitted Medical Certification to substantiate his/her medical leave	
Determine status of Job Description	
Ensure that FMLA has been designated	
Identify/calendar the length of time the employee will take to return to full duty, if on modified duty	
Determine the need for industrial follow up (departments' policy)	
Calendar next item	

Day Seven & Fourteen...

More follow up is required.

ACTION ITEMS
Confirm STD benefits, if appropriate
Follow up on Job Description
Calendar next item

Day Thirty... One month has passed; close monitoring is needed for the ongoing process.

ACTION ITEMS	
Ensure that employee's Medical Certification is updated	
Identify work restriction status	
Contact TPA for workers' compensation claim status as to the disposition of the case (accepted, delay or denied)	
Contact employee and determine status for future employee contacts	
Identify applicable resources <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Nurse Case Management- Follow up on doctor's appointments- Employee interview/questionnaire- Work history and skills	
Calendar next item	
If on approved FMLA, do not contact employee regarding work or interactive process, unless the treating doctor indicates the employee can return to work on an alternate, modified or permanent position.	

Day Seventy... Planning ahead. FMLA is about to expire within two weeks. It is important to start planning for the Interactive Process beginning with an initial meeting.

ACTION ITEMS	
Schedule an Interactive Meeting with the employee at the worksite:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Prepare to discuss all available options- Plan to request a work history from the employee- Prepare to interview employee for outside activities- Contact TPA to check status of WC claim (P&S and work restrictions)	
Confirm employees' Medical Certification has been updated	
If non-workers' compensation, contact Occupational Health Program (OHP) to determine fitness for duty, if appropriate	
Calendar next item	

Day Eighty-Four... Communication is essential to determine suitable job placement for both employee and employer.

ACTION ITEMS
Conduct an in-person Interactive Meeting and ask employee what can be done to return them to work
Discuss all available options with employee: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- voluntary demotion- Y-rate- modified duty- suitable accommodation- filing for Disability Retirement (Plan A to D)- inter-departmental transfer/placement
Document all of the issues discussed during the meeting
Prepare and send letter summarizing the meeting and what was agreed upon
Determine if the case disposition has been made by the workers' compensation TPA
Ensure that the \$10,000 cap for medical costs is not exceeded
Meeting with employee to confirm continued modified work schedule on an hourly basis, or return to FLSA exempt status (modified job would end)
Calendar next item

Day Ninety-Four...

Early planning can help to develop Return to Work issues.

ACTION ITEMS	
Create a plan that facilitates long-term RTW goals and objectives	
Confirm the employee's Medical Certification status	
Contact TPA to obtain the most recent workers' compensation status including Permanent and Stationary (P&S) and work restrictions	
Contact employee's supervisor to discuss work restrictions or transfer opportunities	
Identify department and inter-department permanent position opportunities	
Provide Job Description of a modified/alternative position to the doctor	
Calendar next item	

Day One-hundred twenty... Regular follow up ensures maintaining the focus on set goals.

ACTION ITEMS
Maintain contact with TPA
Maintain contact with employee
Evaluate case for Nurse Case Management and submit request to TPA, if appropriate
Calendar next item
<i>Pregnancy Disability Leave (PDL) expires (88 working days). CFRA runs consecutively with PDL.</i>

6 and 9 Months... If Return to Work efforts have not been successful, it is necessary to continue to focus on identifying obstacles that prevent resolution.

ACTION ITEMS
Summarize previous actions taken - Identify and focus on obstacles
Re-institute a job offer (light duty) by formal correspondence or meeting with the employee
Continue Medical Certification follow up
Continue Job Description follow up
Continue TPA contact follow up
Maintain contact with employee
Determine if LTD letter of approval or denial was sent to employee by VPA (copy to department)
Verify with payroll that STD payments have ceased, and TPA starts TD payments at State rate
Calendar next item

12 Months... If the employee is still off duty, it is important to initiate a complete case re-assessment including the review of all the pertinent documentation developed during the preceding 12 months.

Pending the results of the assessment, determine capacities and limitations for the type of work the injured employee can perform.

ACTION ITEMS	
Contact TPA for the most recent medical status and schedule claim review	
Continue Medical Certification follow up with the employee	
Contact employee/assess employee's expectations and future plans	
Interview employee to gather facts regarding outside activities and hobbies	
Review Job Description and other requirements that are necessary to perform alternative tasks	
Schedule a meeting with concerned parties for "brainstorming" options, after meeting with the employee	
Send supplemental letter to employee at 365 days of salary continuation	
Ensure Workers' Compensation TPA sends notice of TD benefits and begins payments at State rate (Salary continuation 365 days expires County Code 6.60.070, 70%)	
Determine when 4850 ends	
If P & S or no longer receiving T.D., complete RU -94 (DOI before 1-1-04), DWC 10003 or DWC 10133.53 (DOI after 1-1-04)	
Calendar next item	

15, 18, 21, and 23 Months... The claim review process provides a forum for all interested parties to discuss, share information, and facilitate a plan for claim resolution. The ultimate goal is to bring the employee back to work. If not possible, determine other available options.

ACTION ITEMS
<p>Develop a complete profile:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Retirement plan - Job classification - Hire date (CSD) - DOB - LTD benefits - Payroll status - Identify any mitigating circumstances
<p>Determine if case is appropriate for claim review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complex RTW issues - High dollar value cases - Long-term absence and skill retention - Fraud - Other personnel related issues
<p>Provide to the TPA, if selected as a case for claim review</p>
<p>Follow up with TPA the results of the claim review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schedule Interactive Meetings - Gather facts regarding outside activities and hobbies (during the interview) - Discuss with the employee all available options - Set short-term and long-term goals (dates)
<p>Calendar next item</p>

24 Months... Two-Year Temporary Disability (TD) Cap

Temporary disability payments end 24 months from the date of the first TD payment. At 24 months, there should be a clear understanding of the specific case status.

ACTION ITEMS	
Initiate Disability Retirement application (Plan A – D only)	
Return to Work:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Interactive Meeting (face-to-face)- Exchange information with employee- Discuss with employee all available options- Job Offer	
Status of plan of action	
Any additional calendar items	

30 Months... Total disability under LTD occurs at 30 months, if the employee meets the Social Security definition of disability for any occupation.

ACTION ITEMS	
Contact VPA to see if employee has met the Social Security definition of disability. If not, conduct interactive meeting to develop return to work opportunity:	
- Obtain copy of notification letter from VPA	
Plan E employees, start the medical separation process (Civil Services Rule 9.08)	
Plan A - D employees, determine if the employee has filed for disability retirement	